



June 11, 2014 Location: Barry's Corner, Allston, Massachusetts on EARTH















August 29, 2015 Location: Barry's Corner, Allston, Massachusetts on EARTH



## EARTH: 1960 to 1970

### Barry's Corner: The Life and Death of a Neighborhood

*by Allston Brighton Historian Dr. William P. Marchione [written late-90's; condensed by Lydia Eccles]*

Barry's Corner was a tightly-knit neighborhood of strong personalities. Neighborhoods of that sort are fast disappearing from our society. Barry's Corner is remembered by its former residents with affection. But this unusually strong attachment has another, more powerful source. Lending it special intensity is a shared memory of the heroic struggle Barry's Corner waged against the powerful Boston Redevelopment Authority.

A compact working-class neighborhood of 9.3 acres, Barry's corner contained only 52 structures housing seventy-one families. Its ethnic composition was Irish and Italian, with a sprinkling of Polish and French families.

Former resident Francis Bakke described Barry's Corner as "a good place to live. There was a lot of pride in our neighborhood. Children who grew up there often stayed on as adults. It was common to find three generations of a family living there." According to Bernard Redgate, what made life in Barry's Corner special was "a connection with people that you don't have in the suburbs."

Because the neighborhood was well-served by public transportation, a family could get by without a car. Other amenities included Smith Playground, St Anthony's Church and public and parochial schools.

The first indication the neighborhood received of the city's demolition plan came in the spring of 1961. "It came like a bolt. We learned about it one night on the Channel 4 News," noted Bakke. "The city made no effort to notify us before that announcement."

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The BRA's plan called for the demolition of the existing 52 structures, and the construction on the cleared acreage (by well-connected developers) of a 4.5 million ten-story, 372-unit luxury apartment building, to be paid for largely with federal money. The BRA contended that Barry's Corner structures were blighted, a charge residents hotly disputed. The Authority also noted that the existing neighborhood was yielding the city relatively little tax revenue. The luxury complex would pay \$150,000 as compared to the \$15,000 the Barry's Corner properties were contributing. The BRA assured the public that "every effort is being made to assure that the residents now living in the area are provided with suitable new homes."

Barry's Corner residents were outraged. The BRA was proposing to obliterate an entire neighborhood, to seize and demolish private homes so that luxury housing could be constructed, and to pay for this project with public revenues.

When the BRA finally came to the neighborhood for a public hearing on the proposal in June of 1962 (a full year after the initial announcement), it was met by a firestorm of protest. "Members of the BRA," the press commented, "were visibly shaken by the hostile treatment they received."

Neighborhood spokesmen asserted that if public money was to be used in the area at all, it should be used to repair existing streets and structures, rather than to increase Boston's supply of luxury housing. "We saw it as a clear case of robbing from the poor and giving to the rich," noted Bakke.

Father Timony Gleason, Pastor of St. Anthony's Church, observed at the hearing, "The City of Boston has neglected the area. We've never even been given a finished street. Barry's Corner is not a slum area. These people are good, God-loving people. The word blighted means rot and decay. There is nothing rotten, nothing decayed, in Barry's Corner."



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A large sign appeared soon after on the front lawn of the Foricelli house on North Harvard Street containing a simple message: "TO HELL WITH URBAN RENEWAL!!"

In December, 1962, at a City Council hearing, Barry's Corner residents "stoutly reaffirmed their pledge to hold onto their homes until they are driven out by force." They left no stone unturned in their long and vigorous campaign to save the neighborhood. They appealed to every level of government for relief, mostly to no avail. They organized the Citizens for Private Property, which issued a stream of impassioned press releases.

Barry's Corner suffered a major defeat in January, 1963 when the Boston City Council approved the BRA plan by a 5-4 vote. The neighborhood responded by picketing Mayor John Collins home.

The first physical confrontation came in August, 1964, when a BRA appraisal team was driven from the neighborhood. The local paper reported the event under the headline: "Allston Minutemen Rout BRA."

"A horn blasted throughout the North Harvard Street area Tuesday noon, and some 30 citizens turned out in true minute-man fashion to rout an appraisal team from the BRA..."

Homeowners mustered at Redgate's Store at 162 Harvard Street armed with brooms, shovels, sticks and spades minutes after George Tatrault and Bernard Redgate drove through the neighborhood sounding the alarm.

The appraisal team returned, however, this time with police support, and in early August, 1965 most of the residents were evicted, and the city began demolishing Barry's Corner.

The neighborhood's four-year crusade was not without practical effect, however. By early 1965, the

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Barry's Corner controversy was causing the Collins administration deep embarrassment. On July 22, 1965 the Massachusetts State Legislature passed a resolution opposing the Barry's Corner project. The neighborhood met the BRA's August, 1965 evictions with "riotous protests."

Demolition was suspended (40 of the 52 buildings had already come down at that point) and the Mayor announced that the city was withdrawing the luxury apartment proposal.

Ultimately the contract to develop Barry's Corner was awarded to a local development team, The Committee for North Harvard (CNH), cosponsored by a number of churches. The building that presently occupies the Barry's Corner site was built by CNH in 1969-70. The remaining homeowners were deeply bitter over CNH's failure to make the return of their titles part of its development plan. Homeowner spokesperson Marjorie Redgate said, "People who say they are interested in us let these homes get pushed down by bulldozers."

The Redgates and two other residents held out to the bitter end which came finally in October, 1969. The holdouts were joined by almost a hundred protesters who "paraded up and down North Harvard Street in front of the homes chanting anti-urban renewal slogans and stating their determination to stay and support the three holdout families.

It took a squadron of more than 50 Boston policemen to clear the area. In a flurry of shoving and fist-fighting the police dispersed the protesters and some members of the press, established police lines, and carted off a number of protesters to District 14 Police Headquarters for booking on charges of illegal assembly.

The last holdout was a weeping Mrs. Redgate: "I don't want you or the police to be hurt," she told the crowd. "We're all finished here."



## EARTH: 1990 to 2015

When Dr. William P. Marchione wrote the preceding article in the late-90's, he was unaware that over the past eight years Harvard University had spent \$88 million to secretly buy 52 acres of land in Allston, including Barry's Corner, shielding its identity by using real estate developer Bruce Beal as a front.

When Harvard revealed its holdings in 1997, an outcry arose: Mayor Thomas Menino wrote a letter to Harvard president Neil Rudenstine that Harvard's covert acquisitions showed "the highest level of arrogance seen in our city in many years." A critical Boston Globe editorial headlined it "Stealthy Land Grab," and Joan Nolan, president of the Brighton Allston Improvement Association said, "It's very disappointing when you realize someone with a \$9 billion endowment will stoop to these levels."

Under fire, Harvard agreed to pay the city millions in lieu of taxes for its exempt property, and continued buying land. As of 2015, Harvard owns 359 acres in Allston (twice the size of its Cambridge campus).

In October, 2013 the BRA approved Harvard's sweeping ten-year master plan to expand into Allston: a 36-acre commercial "innovation enterprise research district," plus a hotel and conference center; a state-of-the-art science complex anchored by The School of Engineering and Applied Science as well as Life Sciences, including stem cell research; a 300,000 square foot "gateway building" made possible by the demolition of the "blighted" Charlesgate low-income housing project; and at Barry's Corner, the Continuum development -- 325 units of luxury housing and 45,000 square feet of retail space, aiming to transform Barry's Corner into a replica of Harvard Square. (A one bedroom apartment rents for \$2,730.) Harvard is partnering with commercial developers and is conducting an alumni fundraising campaign to raise \$6.5 billion.

## Location: Harvard Innovation District, Allston, Massachusetts

*Boston has an extraordinary concentration of intellectual capital and of research activity, particularly in the life sciences and technology. It is an extremely attractive location for knowledge-intensive industries, and virtually every major pharmaceutical company has, or seeks to have, a research presence in the Boston area.*

*The enterprise research campus will be a very attractive location for large research-intensive companies, for commercial startups, and for social enterprises who want to tap into the wealth and talent that are available in our area, and will contribute to the academic environment by enabling those members of the Harvard community who wish to interact with companies to do so.*

Harvard Provost Alan Garber

*The School of Engineering and Applied Sciences must grow -- more faculty, more space, more resources. The Allston plan is meant to establish SEAS -- perhaps the most collaborative of any Harvard school -- as a hub in a wheel of connectivity that is meant to define and shape the new Allston adventure.*

Harvard President Drew Faust



Transcendental  
Phenomenological Research:  
The Human Experiment



# EARTH

Photographic field research in her immediate vicinity  
by Participant-Observer/Test Human, Lydia Eccles

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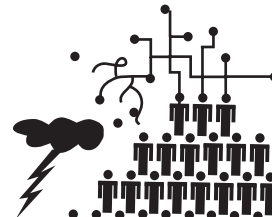
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photo: Ryan Krakowski 2015



Test Human

Mentally unstable, perhaps,  
but very reliable.



*What are we?*

*Where did we come from?*

*Where are we going?*

**COLLAPSE STUDIES : What else can we do?**